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SALT TWO-8/9: CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

State Department
review completed

The ninth session of SALT TWO will be convened in Geneva on June 2 following a one-month recess.

During the previous session, the major roadblocks to agreement, especially the question of limitations on the Backfire bomber and on strategic cruise missiles, remained unresolved, having been set aside for consideration at higher level. The negotiators in Geneva concentrated on drafting agreed treaty language incorporating the understandings on silo volume constraints and on heavy ICBM definition reached during Secretary Kissinger's visit to Moscow in January. The sides achieved partial success in this effort and also moved toward agreement on several other important issues.

The eighth semi-annual session of the Standing Consultative Commission which concluded its meetings on May 5 was similarly spotty in its accomplishments. Progress at both sessions was hampered, by failure to make headway on the key issues and by growing uncertainty over the broader course of US-Soviet relations. In the SCC, in particular, a tougher Soviet attitude was apparent, probably because of the US position on compliance issues.

The Soviets showed little inclination to make important concessions this spring and have probably abandoned hope of an agreement in 1976.

Anticipating no early breakthroughs, Ambassador Johnson has proposed to the Soviets that the negotiators publicly schedule the next recess for July 30, in part to avoid the sort of speculation raised by earlier ad hoc recesses.

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The chief issues addressed at SALT TWO-8 are summarized below:

Silo Volume

In accord with the Moscow understanding, the sides drafted treaty provisions and clarifying codicils limiting silo volume increases to not more than 32 percent of the original internal volume.

Heavy Missile Definition

The sides agreed in principle to a definition based on launch weight and throw weight, although they disagree whether smaller missiles should be defined as "non-heavy" or "light." Launch weight has been jointly defined as "the weight of the fully loaded missile itself at the moment of launch." A throw weight definition awaits agreement on what should be included. The sides are exploring, for example, the case of an ICBM carrying a post-boost vehicle but armed with a single warhead (e.g., the SS-X-16). The Soviets insist such a system is purely hypothetical.

Heavy Missile Cap

The Soviets are holding discussion of this issue hostage to satisfactory resolution of the heavy missile definition issue, specifically the "non-heavy" or "light" designation for smaller ICBMs.

Data Base

The US proposed that the sides agree in advance of treaty signature on the numbers of weapons possessed by each side in each category to be limited. To sweeten the proposal the US offered to drop earlier proposals for information exchange and prior notification. The US also suggested more liberal terms for phasing out Soviet weapons excess to a new agreement. The Soviets have been unreceptive.

ICBM Launcher Definition

The sides narrowed their differences on a definition but have reached no meeting of minds on dual-capable launchers (e.g., SS-X-20 IRBM launchers capable of launching SS-X-16 ICBMs.)

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MIRV Verification

The Soviets have resisted US proposals for a "type-rule" associating types of launchers which have "contained or launched" certain "types" (e.g., MIRVed or non-MIRVed) of missiles. Soviet reluctance to accept the "type" concept is in part related to their wish to avoid a precedent which would strengthen US arguments that all heavy bomber "type" aircraft including tanker and reconnaissance versions must be counted in the aggregate. The Soviets continue to argue for a launcher-by-launcher determination using national technical means of verification.

Conversion of ICBM and SLBM Launchers for MIRVed Missiles

The sides agreed in principle that the new agreement should direct the SCC to develop procedures for converting non-MIRVed ICBM and SLBM launchers to MIRVed launchers. The US is pressing here also for a type rule.

SCC

The Standing Consultative Commission concluded its eighth session on May 5. The commissioners initialed, ad referendum to governments, a joint draft text on pre-agreed messages in implementation of the 1971 Agreement on measures to reduce the risk of outbreak of nuclear war.

The sides also made progress toward, but were unable to complete, an agreed draft text governing ABM replacement procedures. The remaining outstanding issues concern the dismantling of certain ABM radars, specifically the required extent of dismantling and the time permitted for its accomplishment.

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Compliance

The Soviet attitude in discussing compliance issues hardened noticeably during the session, probably primarily as a reaction to the US proposal to resolve the launch control silo (III-X) and Minuteman shelter issues simultaneously by an exchange of observers. In rejecting the US proposal, the Soviets made their usual objection to on-site inspection as a substitute for verification by national technical means, denied any linkage between two issues which were different in nature, and made their strongest statement to date regarding Minuteman III shelters. With respect to the latter, they stated that the shelters impede Soviet NTM, can be classified as deliberate concealment measures prohibited by Article V of the Interim Agreement, and that the practice must cease without delay and without any conditions on linkage.

At the opening of the session, the Soviets openly admitted [REDACTED] that they had failed to meet the dismantling schedule of the 1974 SCC procedures that required them to have 51 older ICBM or SLBM launchers completely dismantled by March 1, 1976 in return for new SLBM launchers on nuclear-powered submarines which had entered sea trials. The Soviets claimed when pressed that they had encountered some technical difficulties but would have the required dismantling completed by June 1, 1976, and would not send another new SSBN to sea trials before that date.

[REDACTED]

In response to US concern over a possibly illegal deployment of an ABM radar, the Soviets refused an exchange of information on the location of current ABM test ranges, reaffirming that the Soviet side believes that such ranges can be identified with adequate reliability by NTM. The Soviets did offer, however, to allow the US to consider the complex containing a FLAT TWIN ABM radar on the Kamchatka Peninsula as a current test range within the meaning of Article IV of the ABM Treaty.

The ninth regular SCC session is scheduled to open on September 20.

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Washington

The Verification Panel Working Group completed a new draft of a SALT Alternatives paper which may serve as the basis for the next Verification Panel meeting scheduled for June 3. In addition, a VPWG ad hoc group is writing a paper outlining US policy alternatives on the remaining "peripheral issues."

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